



Literacy

BOOKMARK
THIS

Writing to Enhance Comprehension: Effective Strategies for Writing About Reading

February 6th, 2026

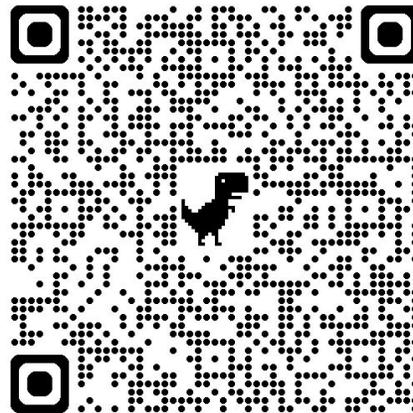
Fr-C11

Room 101B

2:15-3:30pm

Lindsay Johnson and Heather Brown

CESA 6 Literacy Center Consultants



GETTING TO KNOW US...



Literacy



Lindsay Johnson

Literacy Consultant,  CESA₆

- Daughter, Wife, Twin Mom, Sister, Aunt, Friend & Teammate
- 20 years in education
 - Reading Specialist/Interventionist
 - Instructional Coach
 - High school English teacher and special educator
- Wanderer. Book Lover. Master Multitasker. Green Thumb.



Heather Brown

Literacy Consultant,  CESA₆

- Daughter, Wife, Mom of 2, Sister, Aunt, Friend & Teammate
- 15 years in education
 - Instructional Coach
 - Middle School Teacher
- Sideline cheerleader. Book Lover. Jet Setter at Heart. Family Centered.

Description



Discover a variety of high-impact routines designed to support writing about reading in the adolescent classroom. Focused on practical strategies, the session will cover effective note-taking techniques, summarization practices and how to leverage text structures to improve both comprehension and writing skills. Educators will walk away with actionable tools to help students engage more deeply with texts, enhance their understanding, and strengthen their ability to articulate their thoughts through writing. This session will provide invaluable techniques to foster stronger literacy outcomes in the classroom.

Goals for the Session



By the end of our time today we will be able to complete the following.

Identify and practice high-impact writing-about-reading routines—note-taking, summarization, and response writing—to help adolescents make meaning from complex texts.

Understand how text structures can be leveraged to strengthen both reading comprehension and written expression, and apply at least one strategy that helps students organize ideas from text more effectively.

Leave with actionable, classroom-ready tools that increase student engagement with texts and improve students' ability to clearly articulate understanding through writing across content areas.

High Leverage Routines



What is an “instructional routine”?

- A structure for teaching and learning through explicit and predictable steps, typically including modeling and practice opportunities through a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., “I do,” “we do,” “you do”)
- Intended to be repeated regularly, over time, with different instructional goals

High Leverage Routines



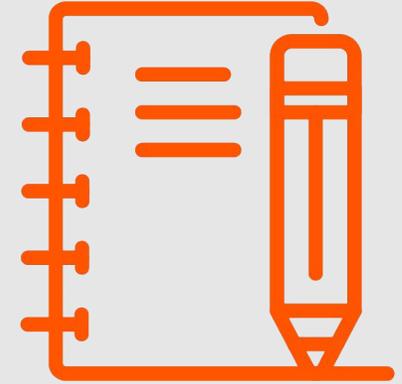
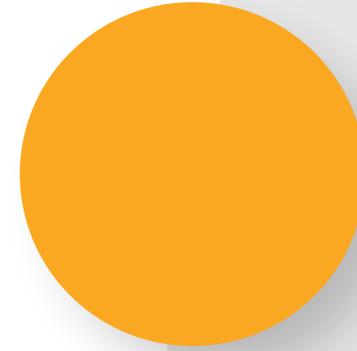
What makes a routine “high leverage”?

- Supported by a body of research or evidence
- Resource agnostic
- Spans multiple grade levels/ability levels
- Could be used in different contexts (whole group vs. small group, different content areas)

Reflect...

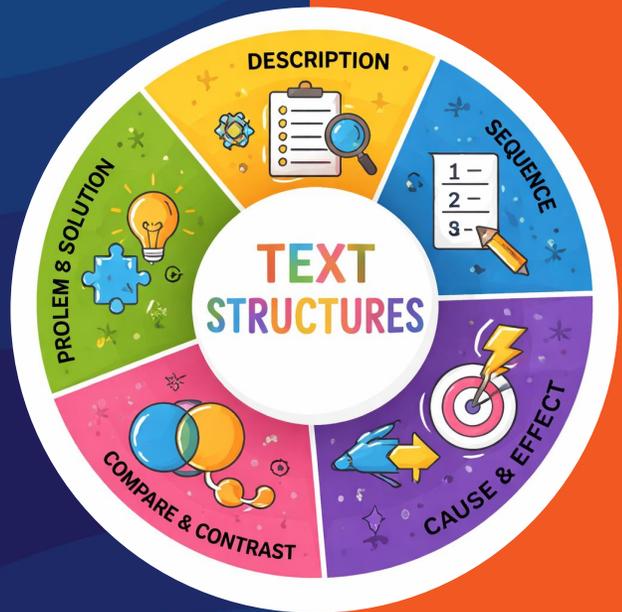


Jot down roadblocks that you encounter with your writers, specifically when it comes to writing about reading.



Text Structures





Students often experience greater difficulty comprehending and writing about informational texts because they are less familiar with nonfiction text structures and the organizational demands they place on readers.”

— Duke, Pearson, & Cervetti

TEXT STRUCTURE STARTS WITH KNOWLEDGE



Cultural and Linguistic Knowledge

everyday experiences

Strategic Knowledge

useful processes that help understand and think deeply

Textual Knowledge

genre, structures, features that help integrate information

Word Knowledge

phonics, morphology, vocabulary that help make connections to the larger meaning

Content Knowledge

expertise in content that helps understand new information

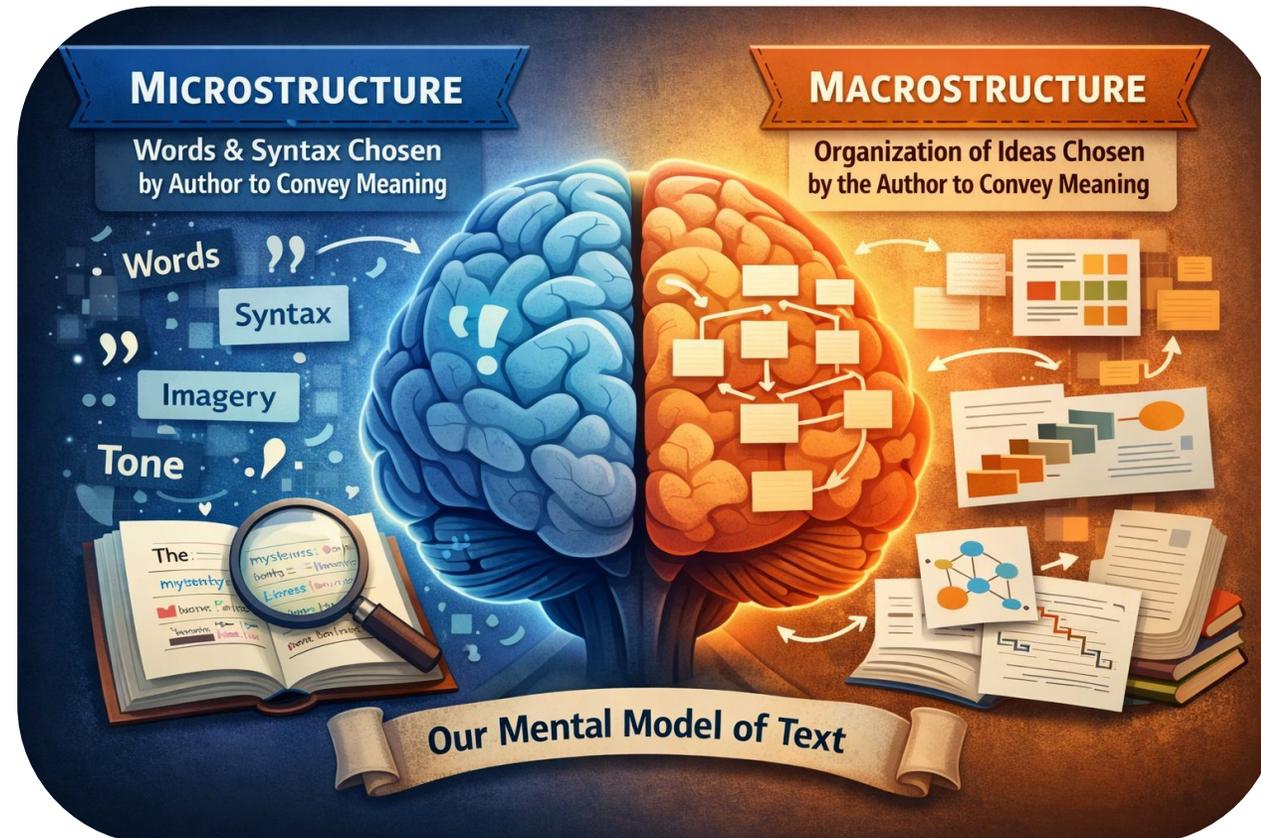


TEXT STRUCTURE STARTS WITH KNOWLEDGE



Textual Knowledge

genre, structures, features that help integrate information



TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Opportunities for Explicit Instruction

Explicitly teach common text features, including

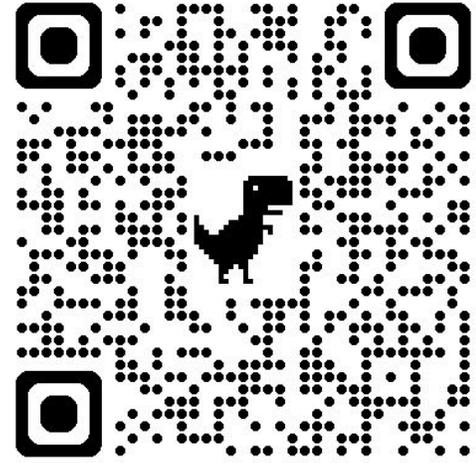
- Where to find them
- What their purpose is
- How they connect to learning– and therefore comprehension of the text

Building Background Knowledge

Text Features to Support Text Structure

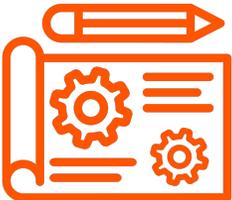
Rationale: Skilled readers know and use the text features typically found in informational text. They know where to find them, what their purpose is, and their connection to learning– which is the goal of comprehending informational text. Furthermore, previewing and attending to text features cues readers to the text’s structure, organization, and content– which is critical to identifying the main idea and key details.

Feature	Location	Purpose	Connection to Learning
Title	Front of the book or top of article	Identifies the major topic of the text; provides a “mini summary” for the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will I be learning about?
Table of Contents	Front of the book	Introduces the reader to the organization and content of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What information about this topic will I learn about?• Where will I find information on ___?
Chapter/Section Titles	Throughout the text	Introduces the reader to the main topic for this section of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the main topic for this section?• What will I learn about in this section?



TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Opportunities for Explicit Instruction



Model and provide guided practice previewing text features to focus attention on the structure, organization, and content of the text.

Building Background Knowledge



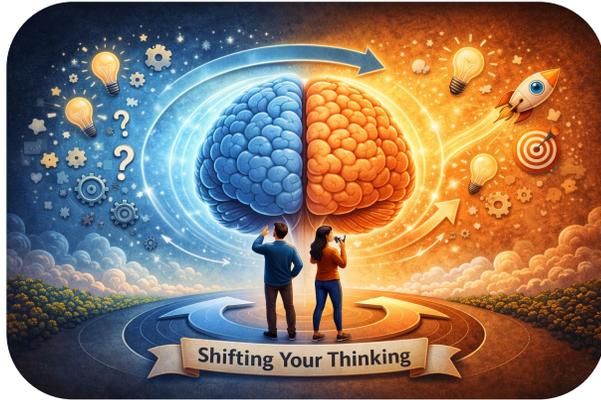
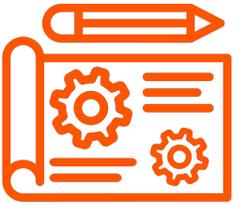
Text Features to Support Text Structure

Rationale: Skilled readers know and use the text features typically found in informational text. They know where to find them, what their purpose is, and their connection to learning-- which is the goal of comprehending informational text. Furthermore, previewing and attending to text features cues readers to the text's structure, organization, and content-- which is critical to identifying the main idea and key details.

Title	Front of the book or top of article	Identifies the major topic of the text; provides a "mini summary" for the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What will I be learning about?
Table of Contents	Front of the book	Introduces the reader to the organization and content of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What information about this topic will I learn about? • Where will I find information on ____?
Chapter/ Section Titles	Throughout the text	Introduces the reader to the main topic for this section of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the main topic for this section? • What will I learn about in this section?
Headings/ Subheadings	Within the chapters or sections of the text	Guides the reader through topics and related main ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I find the topics I will learn about in this section? • How can I find the important ideas about the topic of this section?

TEACHING INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Opportunities for Explicit Instruction



From teaching text features as
an end . . .

. . . to teaching text features as
a means for understanding a
text's macrostructure

Building Background Knowledge

Text Features to Support Text Structure



Rationale: Skilled readers know and use the text features typically found in informational text. They know where to find them, what their purpose is, and their connection to learning— which is the goal of comprehending informational text. Furthermore, previewing and attending to text features cues readers to the text's structure, organization, and content— which is critical to identifying the main idea and key details.

Feature	Location	Purpose	Connection to Learning
Title	Front of the book or top of article	Identifies the major topic of the text; provides a "mini summary" for the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What will I be learning about?
Table of Contents	Front of the book	Introduces the reader to the organization and content of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What information about this topic will I learn about?Where will I find information on ____?
Chapter/ Section Titles	Throughout the text	Introduces the reader to the main topic for this section of the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none">What is the main topic for this section?What will I learn about in this section?
Headings/ Subheadings	Within the chapters or sections of the text	Guides the reader through topics and related main ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">How can I find the topics I will learn about in this section?How can I find the important ideas about the topic of this section?

RAP: Read, Ask, Paraphrase

Teaching Students HOW to Use Informational Text Structure

The shift to studying paragraph structure to support comprehension



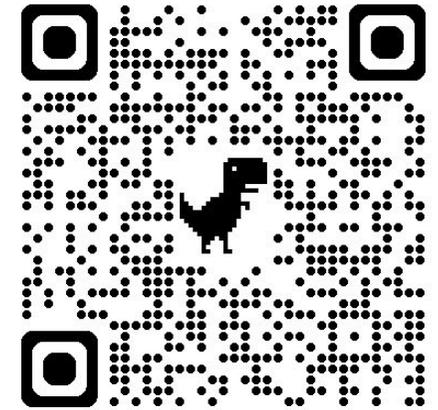
Instructional Approaches to Help Students Read Texts

RAP: Read, Ask, Paraphrase

A Routine To Leverage Paragraph Text Structure To Support Comprehension Of Nonfiction Texts

- Reading passage from "Stress for Success" by Alice Pearce Stevens (2015). Retrieved from CommonLit.

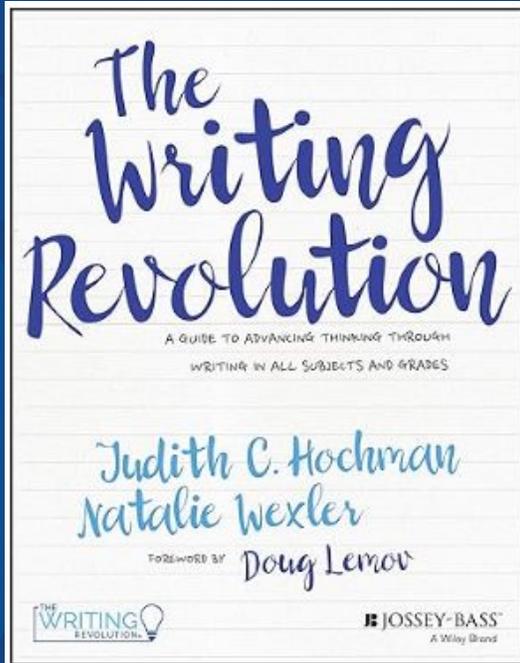
Routine	Examples
Read the paragraph	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A pounding heart. Tense muscles. Sweat-beaded forehead. The sight of a coiled snake or a deep chasm might trigger such stress responses. These physical reactions signal that the body is prepared to deal with a life-threatening situation.
Ask yourself about the main idea and details in this paragraph.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This paragraph is about the physical symptoms of anxiety.• This is a descriptive paragraph.
Ask yourself what text structure the paragraph uses.	
Paraphrase the main idea and key details. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students who need additional support can use a text-structure-specific sentence stem:• Descriptive: Some characteristics of ___ are	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some characteristics of anxiety are physical symptoms like tense muscles and sweating, because these physical symptoms get the body ready for a life-threatening situation.



**Writing About
Reading:
Note-Taking**



The Power of Note-Taking



“**Converting** text or speech to notes is one of the most valuable skills you can teach your students . . . it’s a way of forcing students to **process and understand** what they’ve read, heard, and learned.”

Hochman, J.C. & Wexler, N. (2017). *The writing revolution: A guide to advancing thinking through writing in all subjects* (p.64). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

PURPOSEFUL NOTE-TAKING



Cause	Effect
• He outlawed Slaves	Americans were afraid if they freed them
• Texas broke the agreement	A fight broke out
★ They wanted Mexico to move its borders	The 2 countries disagreed
★ "American blood has been spilled" they wrote to him	The president had an excuse to go to war
★ Congress entered	Many were with him

Source: [AVID Note-Taking Samples \(4th Grade\)](#)

The goal of note taking is to **organize information** in some way, **connecting ideas** and **blending new information with existing knowledge** to **develop new understandings** about the text

PURPOSEFUL NOTE-TAKING



Literary Elements © © I.n.t
9-10-15

Elements	Description	Example
Characters	people animals objects	Junie B. Jones Sponge Bob captain under pants spider man sun blazed
Setting	Where and when	grassland clouds and rain
Plot	The order of events	wanted to be a artist practiced won contest went to camp met a friend
Illustrations	drawings 	help you understand feeling/mood
Theme	the lesson or central message	Be careful what you wish for
point of view	A characters way of seeing	The third pig smartest

Model, practice, and expect students to take notes ***about the texts they read*** – not ***just*** tracking definitions and terms.

PURPOSEFUL NOTE-TAKING

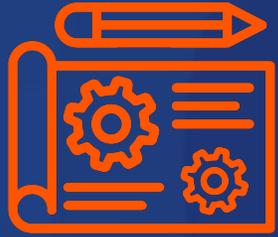


The Mexican American War grew from disagreements between Mexico and the United States over the annexation of Texas. First there were disagreements over slavery and whether Texas should be annexed by the U.S. Then there were disagreements about where the border actually was. This caused fighting and U.S. soldiers were killed, so Congress authorized war.

Cause	Effect
• He outlawed slaves	Americans were afraid if they freed them
• Texas broke the agreement	A fight broke out
* They wanted Mexico to move its borders	The 2 countries disagreed
* "American blood has been spilled they wrote to him"	The president had an excuse to go to war
* Congress authorized	Many were killed

Actively use the notes to facilitate ***discussion*** and ***writing about reading.***

Note Taking Structures



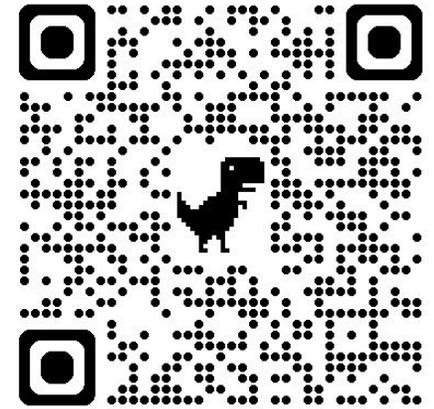
Independently review
the tool

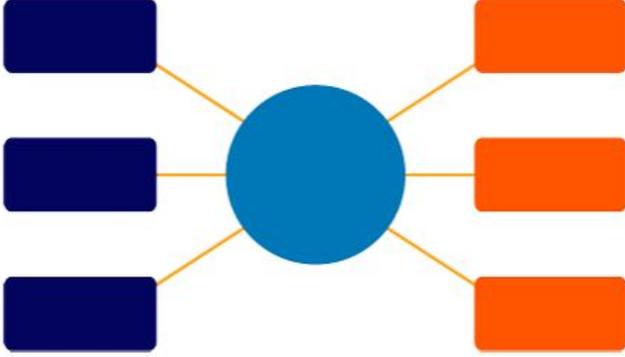
Note-Taking Structures



Supporting the Reading-Writing Connection

Note: All of these note-taking structures should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced before students are expected to independently take notes.



Structure	Description
<p>Concept Maps</p>  <pre>graph LR; C(()) --- L1[]; C --- L2[]; C --- L3[]; C --- R1[]; C --- R2[]; C --- R3[]</pre>	<p>Concept maps can be provided by the teacher or student-generated. They may be open-ended (as in the first example) or more structured (as in the character analysis example).</p> <p>Literary Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine a focus for the notes (character, setting, theme, use of literary device/figurative language, etc.) and write it in the center bubble• As students read, they collect textual evidence in the surrounding bubbles• Option: if students are ready for more, they can branch another layer of bubbles off of each piece of evidence to add their own thinking (i.e., explanation or elaboration)• Students use their concept map to participate in a

Note Taking Structures

What types of note-taking structures could benefit your students or do you want to model (or both)?

Discuss an upcoming lesson or unit where this could be used.

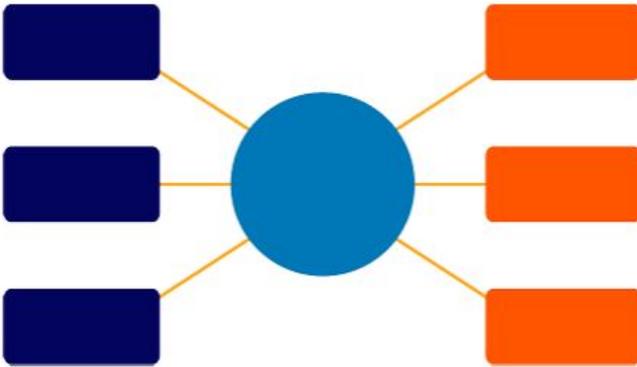


Note-Taking Structures



Supporting the Reading-Writing Connection

Note: All of these note-taking structures should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced before students are expected to independently take notes.

Structure	Description
Concept Maps	Concept maps can be provided by the teacher or student-generated. They may be open-ended (as in the first example) or more structured (as in the character analysis example).
	Literary Texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine a focus for the notes (character, setting, theme, use of literary device/figurative language, etc.) and write it in the center bubble• As students read, they collect textual evidence in the surrounding bubbles• Option: if students are ready for more, they can branch another layer of bubbles off of each piece of evidence to add their own thinking (i.e., explanation or elaboration)

Writing About Reading: Summarizing



EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION BEFORE ROUTINES



1. Identify the main idea and key details
2. Disregard trivial information
3. Disregard redundant information
4. Write a short synopsis of the main idea and key details





Meaning:

The main point, overarching theme, or essence of speech or text.
(noun)

Example:

I didn't catch every word between them, but I heard enough to get the *gist* of the conversation.

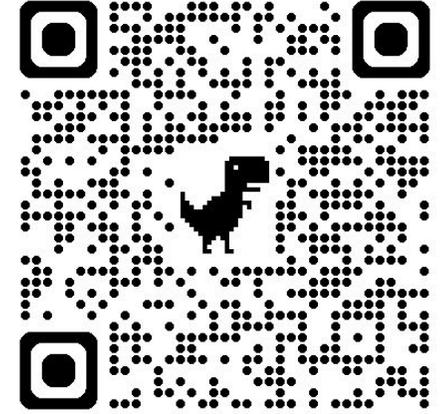
\$2.00 GIST List Summaries



Read through the routine

\$2 Gist Lists

A Routine to Help Students Prioritize Details From The Text to Write Summaries



Process	Sample (Text: "Tea Overboard" by Mike Weinstein)
<p>Students Read Section or Passage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students underline or highlight words that relate to the main ideas and key details of the passage• This can be done independently or with a partner• This is a first step/brainstorming step– it is okay if they highlight/ underline a lot. They will prioritize in the next step	<p>TEA OVERBOARD! By Mike Weinstein (2001)</p> <p>A strange-looking group of people gathered on a Boston wharf one dark night in December 1773. Some were dressed as American Indians. Others had their faces smeared with soot. They were about to push the American Colonies much closer to war with England.</p> <p>The crowd on the wharf boarded three English ships. Once on board, they began dumping heavy chests of tea into the harbor. They poured so much tea into the water that the tea leaves began piling up and spilling back into the boats. Thousands of pounds of valuable tea were ruined.</p> <p>This destructive act of defiance is known as the Boston Tea Party. The disguised mob was made up of angry patriots laborers, merchants, and even a 14-year-old apprentice. Many say that Paul Revere was part of the group.</p> <p>The tea belonged to an English company. England required the colonists to pay special taxes on the tea. The mob believed that it was unfair for England to tax the Colonies, so they dumped the tea rather than pay taxes on it.</p>
<p>Students Write a \$2 Gist List</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students work with a partner or small group to prioritize no more than 20 words that capture the "gist"-- the most important ideas and information from the text (compound nouns "count" as one word)• Explain that every word students select for their	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boston Tea Party• American Colonies• England• defiance• protest• Sons of Liberty

\$2.00 GIST List Summaries



See it in action!



What could this routine look like in your classroom?



Executive Skills: The Hidden Drivers of Writing About Reading



ACTIVE VIEW OF READING



“Executive functions such as working memory, cognitive flexibility, and self-monitoring play a central role in coordinating the processes involved in reading comprehension.”

— Cartwright, *Executive Skills and Reading Comprehension*

Executive Function is a set of mental skills that help us get things done. Some think of it as “the management system of the brain.”

-Understood.org



Executive Function is what helps readers coordinate and integrate the overlap between word recognition and language comprehension.

Proficient Reader Profile



Executive Functioning Skills is the glue that holds all of these reading processes together!

Phonological Awareness

Vocabulary & Morphological Knowledge

Phonics and Orthographic Knowledge

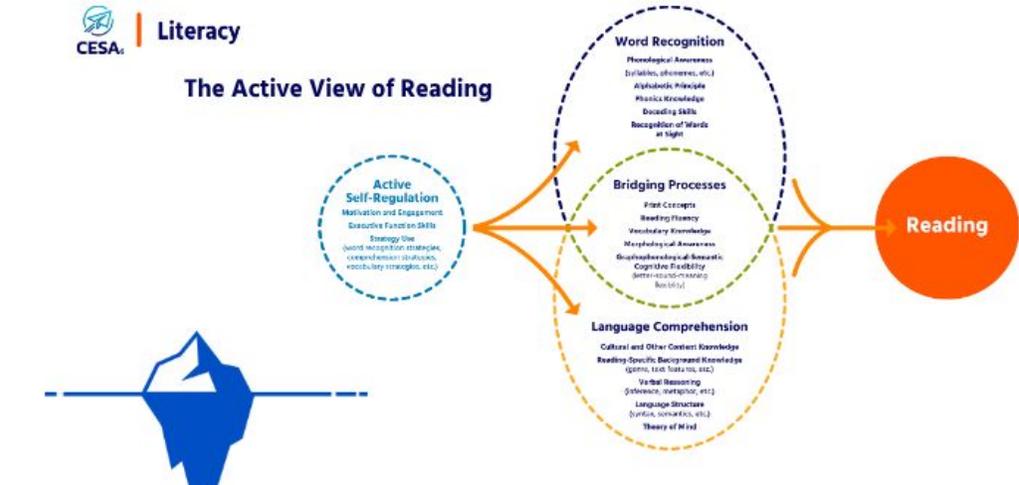
Background Knowledge & Text Structure

Executive Functioning Skills That Support Comprehension



Identify five students whose executive skill gaps interfere with their ability to comprehend texts and write about what they read.

Literacy
The Active View of Reading



Active Self-Regulation
Motivation and Engagement
Executive Function Skills
Strategy Use
(word-recognition strategies, vocabulary strategies, etc.)

Word Recognition
Phonological Awareness
(syllables, rhymes, etc.)
Alphabetic Principle
Phonics Knowledge
Decoding Skills
Recognition of Words
at Sight

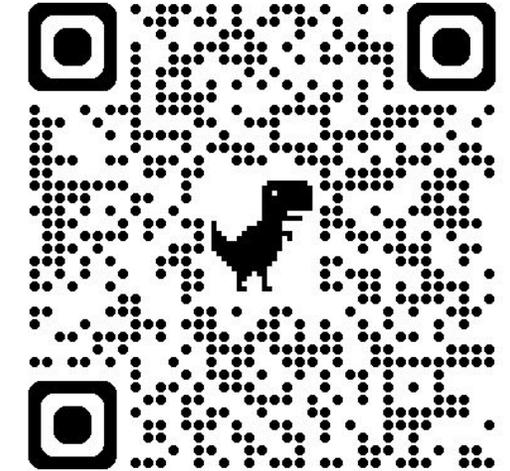
Bridging Processes
Fluency Concepts
Reading Fluency
Vocabulary Knowledge
Morphological Awareness
Suprasegmentals of Speech
Cognitive Flexibility
(letter-sound mapping, etc.)

Language Comprehension
Cultural and Other Context Knowledge
Reading-Specific Background Knowledge
(genre, text features, etc.)
Verbal Reasoning
(inference, comparison, etc.)
Language Structure
(syntax, semantics, etc.)
Theory of Mind

Reading

Executive Functioning Skills That Support Comprehension

Cognitive Flexibility	The ability to take information and switch between that information at various points when engaging in a task.	Ex: Switching between <u>author's</u> purpose and the character's perspective.
Inhibition	The ability to ignore irrelevant information.	Ex: Ignoring irrelevant information in a text or distracting elements around you.
Monitoring	The ability to reflect on your <u>own</u> thoughts while reading (metacognition).	Ex: Monitoring your comprehension while reading.
Organization	The ability to create a system to manage information.	Ex: Having an understanding of the way a text is structured (Beginning, middle, end)
Planning	The ability to determine which tasks are necessary to complete a goal	Ex: Understanding the purpose <u>for</u> reading a text.
Social Understanding	The ability to infer feelings, thoughts, motives, etc <u>and</u> make predictions.	Ex: Understanding a character's motives to make predictions of the story's outcome.
Switching or Shifting	The ability to change your focus from an initial idea to a new idea	Ex: Related to cognitive flexibility



Executive Skills: Summary Writing



Read through the
routine

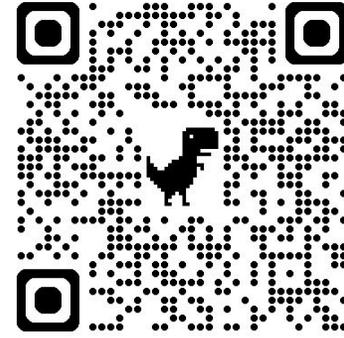
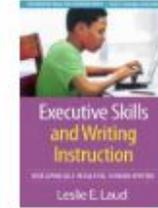


PLAN-DISTILL-CHECK Summary Routine



Purpose: To support students in managing executive demands of summary writing by making planning, prioritizing, and self-monitoring explicit.

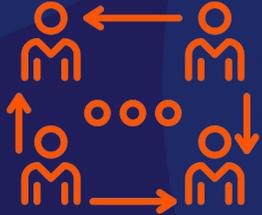
- Based on the work of Leslie E. Laud and Kelly B. Cartwright



Step 1: PLAN (Reduce Cognitive Load Before Writing)

Teacher Action	Student Action	Executive Skills Targeted
<p>Model how to preview the text and identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Central idea• Section/topic chunks <p>Provide a visual planning tool (e.g., 3–5 boxes labeled “Key Idea”).</p>	<p>Before writing, students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write 1–2 words per box (not sentences)• Focus on <i>what matters most</i>, not details	<p>Planning Task initiation Organization</p>

Executive Skills: Summary Writing

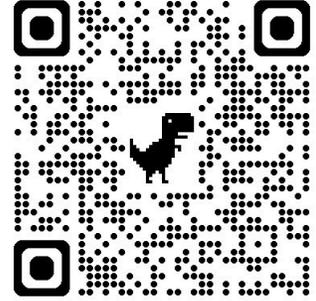
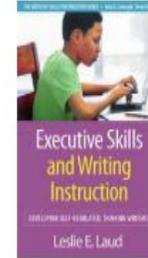


With a partner, read through the sample.

How could this routine be beneficial with your students?



PLAN-DISTILL-CHECK Summary Routine- SAMPLE



Purpose: To support students in managing executive demands of summary writing by making planning, prioritizing, and self-monitoring explicit.

- Based on the work of Leslie E. Laud and Kelly B. Cartwright

The New Deal and the Great Depression

After the stock market crash of 1929, the United States entered the Great Depression, a period of severe economic hardship. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, banks failed, and many families struggled to afford basic necessities such as food and housing. By 1933, nearly one quarter of the workforce was unemployed.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, he introduced a series of programs known as the New Deal. These

Executive Skills: Response Writing



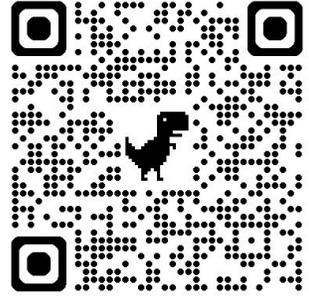
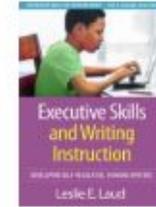
Read through the
routine

FOCUS-PLAN-WRITE-CHECK Response Routine



Purpose: To support students in managing the executive demands of response writing by making thinking, organizing, and self-monitoring explicit.

- Based on the work of Leslie E. Laud and Kelly B. Cartwright



Step 1: FOCUS (Understand the Task)

Teacher Action	Student Action	Executive Skills Targeted
Read the prompt aloud Highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to do (explain, describe, argue)• What to write about (topic/text)	Students restate the prompt using a frame: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>This response will explain...</i>• <i>I am writing about...</i>	Attention Inhibition (filtering irrelevant ideas) Task initiation

Step 2: PLAN (Externalize Thinking)

Executive Skills: Response Writing



With a partner, read through the sample.

How could this routine be beneficial with your students?

FOCUS-PLAN-WRITE-CHECK Response Routine- SAMPLE



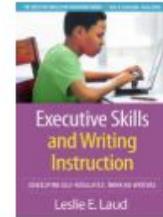
Purpose: To support students in managing executive demands of summary writing by making planning, prioritizing, and self-monitoring explicit.

- Based on the work of Leslie E. Laud and Kelly B. Cartwright

The New Deal and the Great Depression

After the stock market crash of 1929, the United States entered the Great Depression, a period of severe economic hardship. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, banks failed, and many families struggled to afford basic necessities such as food and housing. By 1933, nearly one quarter of the workforce was unemployed.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt became president, he introduced a series of programs known as the New Deal. These programs aimed to provide relief to people suffering from poverty, promote economic recovery, and reform financial systems to prevent future crises. Government agencies created jobs through public works projects, regulated banks and the stock market, and offered assistance to farmers and homeowners.



Reflect...



Commitment



Which of routines from this session could be helpful for your students?

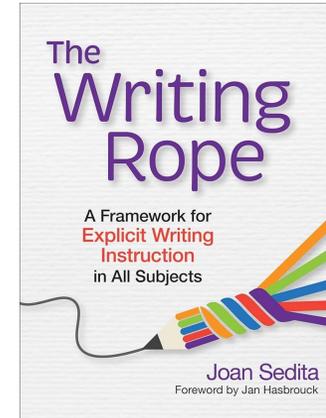
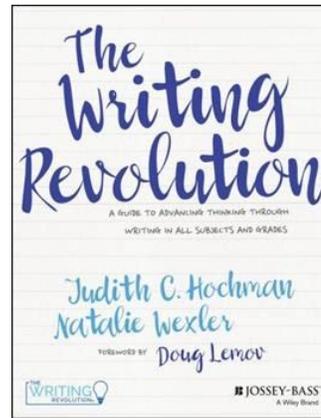
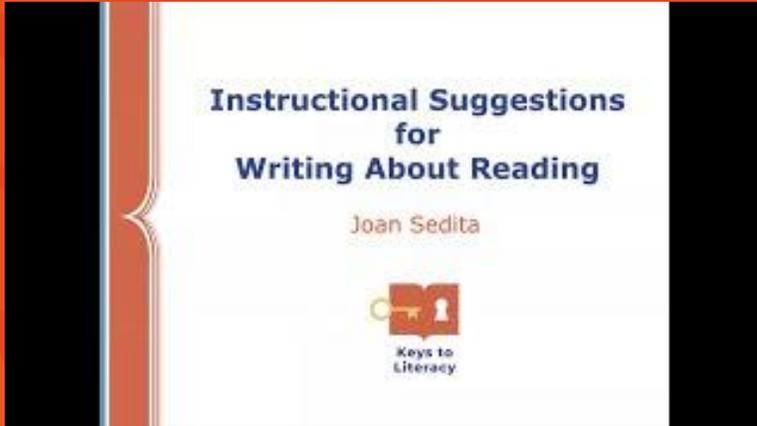
Is there an upcoming lesson(s) you have where you could easily embed one or more of these routines?

What can you commit to around teaching informational text structure, executive functioning, summary and response writing instruction? Write a commitment and share it with a partner.

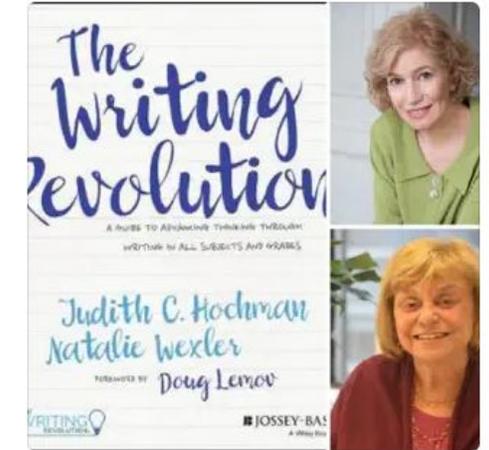


Processing
Time

Additional Resources



Ep. 117: The Writing Revolution with Authors Judith Hochman and Natalie Wexler
Melissa & Lori Love Literacy™



56 min



The Writing Rope: A Framework for Evidence-Based Writing Instruction



Joan Sedita

Founder of Keys to Literacy



Ep. 4, Reading Comprehension Revisited: "Now they had something to write about"

July 12, 2023 - Knowledge Matters Podcast



The Knowledge Matters Podcast

"Now they had something to write about" | Reading



00:00 | 25:08

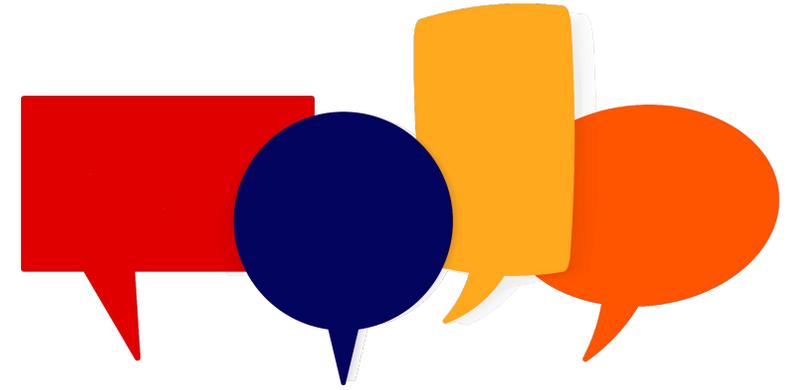
Four Strategies for Effective Writing Instruction

By Larry Ferlazzo — June 19, 2021 | 10 min read

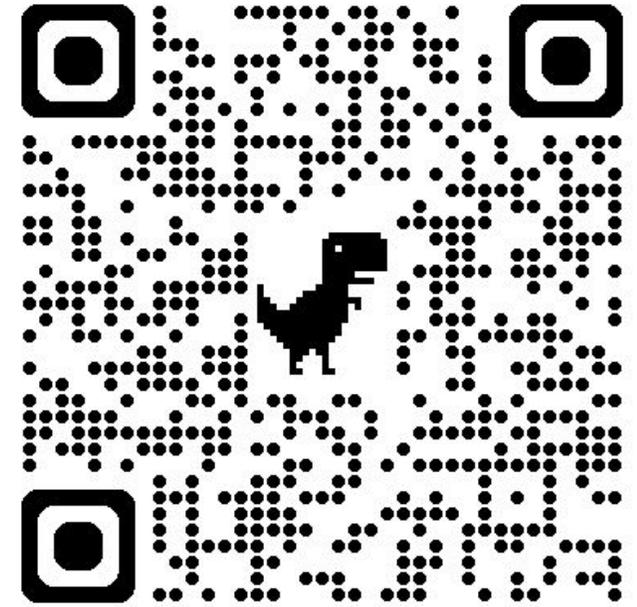


Feedback Form

Please take a moment to fill out the feedback form for today's session.



SAHA TERIMA KASIH ÇOX SAG OLUN SHOUKRAN
EVKARISTO TEŞEKKÜR TAK RAHMAT ДЯКУЮ KIITOS
DANKON EDERIM DANK UWEL ありがとう GRAZIE
MAHALO DANKE SCHÖN DANK JE СПАСИБО
TACK ØBRIGADØ/A TÄNAN DĚKUJI
DANKIE ДЗЯКУЮ DZIEKUJE CÁM ƠN
AČIŪ 감사합니다 BARDZO 谢谢你
ASANTE TØ'DA KHØP KUN धन्यवाद MAHD-LOBT
MULTUMESK XBAAA شكرا TAKK KÖSZÖNÖM PALDIES
DAKUJEM MERCİ HVALA GRACIAS





All Products & Solutions

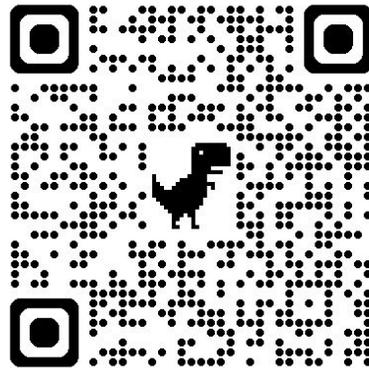
Filter: Availability ▾

Price ▾

Event Grade Level ▾

Sort by: Alphabetically, A-Z ▾

125 products



Questions?

Lindsay Johnson

✉ ljohnson@cesa6.org

☎ (920)236-0875

Heather Brown

✉ hbrown@cesa6.org

☎ (920)236-0878

